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## It's a state-by-state Reform Party ballot battle

August 24, 2000

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By Mike Glover/Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) -- Iowa election officials drew Pat Buchanan's name in a glass-bowl lottery Thursday after a raucous hallway exchange between Reform Party factions fighting for a spot on the state's November ballot.

In Montana, meanwhile, rival John Hagelin was the winner in a film-can drawing.

In California, Buchanan's name was pulled off the ballot.

Two weeks after the party's national convention was supposed to choose a nominee, the battle continues between Buchanan, the former Republican, and Hagelin, the Natural Law candidate embraced by supporters of Reform Party founder Ross Perot as a way of blocking Buchanan.

Each candidate says he's the party's legitimate nominee. And state election officials, facing deadlines for printing ballots, are caught in the middle, sometimes even resorting to lotteries.

"Right now we consider that party over-nominated," dryly observed Larry Perosino, a spokesman for Connecticut's secretary of state.

In California, Buchanan had been briefly listed, but was pulled from the ballot Thursday at the request of party leaders, said Alfie Charles, a spokesman for the secretary of state there. Party leaders "continue to meet to resolve the problem," he said.

Buchanan claimed the national nomination at the party's Long Beach, Calif., convention, but some disaffected party members walked out and chose Hagelin, who has run for president before under the Natural Law Party banner.

Faced with conflicting instructions from party officials, election officials in Iowa and Montana decided to hold lotteries.

Iowa Secretary of State Chet Culver drew Buchanan's name from a glass bowl, but only after a bitter exchange in the hallway outside his office.

Buchanan backer Ed Moses claimed to be the official leader of the state's Reform Party and labeled documents filed by Hagelin backers as "bogus."

"I'm tired of this fiasco," said Moses.

"He is coming here to rabble rouse," grumbled Simi Summer, a Hagelin backer.

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"God was with us," shouted Moses, after Buchanan's name was drawn.

As a result of the drawing, Buchanan will be listed as the Reform Party candidate and Hagelin will be on the ballot as "nominated by petition."

"We're not taking anyone off the ballot," said Culver.

In Montana, Secretary of State Mike Cooney pulled Hagelin's name from a ballot box filled with film cans -- 10 for each man -- giving him the Reform Party designation. Both sides opposed the drawing, and a lawsuit is expected.

The bitterness reflects a split that has developed as Buchanan has tried to take over the reins of the party founded by Perot. Despite gaining control of the old party structure, Buchanan still must fight a state-by-state battle to gain access to ballots.

The deadline for setting most ballots is in late August or early September, so the fight is coming to a head.

"We're trying to get clarification who is the real candidate," said Michigan Board of Elections spokesman Chris Thomas.

In Kentucky and South Carolina, election officials are waiting to see if the Reform Party itself can sort through the issue. Those officials, and their counterparts in Oklahoma, say they might ask the Federal Election Commission for guidelines.

In Alabama, both will be listed as independents, and in Minnesota the Reform Party is considered a minor party, though Gov. Jesse Ventura was once a member.

"There is no protection for the minor parties," said Secretary of State Mary Kiffmeyer. "This is a very unique circumstance." Both men will be listed, she said.

Hagelin started out this year as the candidate of the Natural Law Party, and West Virginia election officials say that's how he will be listed on the ballot.

That's the case in Ohio, too, where Buchanan was submitting signatures to get on the ballot as an independent.

In New York, Buchanan backers had submitted petitions with more than 30,000 signatures, double the number needed to be listed on the ballot under the Reform party banner.

Hagelin was first to file in North Carolina, but Buchanan's forces are challenging that move and the state Elections Board must resolve the dispute, with a court fight possible. An appeals panel was hearing arguments on the dispute Thursday.

In Utah, a supporter submitted Buchanan's name as the party's nominee, and that's how he'll be listed on the ballot.

Hawaii officials are seeking a legal opinion on handling filings from a split party, but so far only Buchanan has filed petitions.

Most polls have shown Buchanan with just 1 or 2 percent support nationally. Hagelin has less than that. Perot won 19 percent of the vote in the 1992 election and 8 percent in 1996. He declined to run this year.

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